

Amendments To The Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning on originally filed page 17 line 7 with the following paragraph:

Figures 5A and 5C show a second embodiment of the present invention in which the stent 10 in its expanded form has a gradual taper from proximal end 12 to distal end 14. In FIG. 5A, the shaded segments 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82 and 84 of expansion struts 28 represent regions of expansion struts 28 to be removed. As shown schematically in FIG. 5C, removal of the shaded segments 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82 and 84 provides stent 10 with a gradual taper when expanded with distal end 14 having a smaller expanded diameter than proximal end 12. The degree of shortening of the expanded diameter of the stent 10 at a given expansion column 24 will be proportional to the length of the removed segment 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, or 84 at that expansion column 24. In the expanded stent 10 the shortened expansion struts 28 will have a shortened component along the circumference of the stent resulting in a shortened circumference and diameter. The tapered diameter portion can be positioned anywhere along the length of stent 10, and the tapering can be made more or less gradual by removing appropriately larger or smaller portions of the expansion struts 28 in a given expansion column 24. In at least one embodiment of the inventive concept, the stent comprises a plurality of interconnected annular elements comprising struts 28. The adjacent annular elements define a flow path through the stent. At least a portion of the flow path of the stent has a tapered configuration in the expanded state. The tapered configuration defines a relative difference in diameter between a portion of the stent closer to the first end (12 or 14) and a portion of the stent closer to the second end (14 or 12 respectively). At least some of the tapered configuration occurs between an annular element having a greatest tapered diameter and an annular element having a narrowest tapered diameter. At least some of the tapered configuration occurs along a portion of the longitudinal length where the struts 28 of the annular elements are of substantially equal width.